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DE RUEHRL #1569/01 3441024
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 101024Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6032
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1578
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA PRIORITY 0436
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USAF RAMSTEIN AB GE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDRUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 001569

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/09/2019

TAGS: [KCFE](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [GM](#) [RU](#)

SUBJECT: GERMAN-HOSTED CFE SEMINAR FORESHADOWS MAJOR PUSH
ON CFE AS FOLLOW-ON TO START AGREEMENT

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR GEORGE GLASS. REASONS: 1.4
(B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The German MFA hosted on November 25-26 a seminar on conventional arms control in Europe (CFE), continuing a series of Berlin seminars that are ostensibly designed to stimulate creative thinking about how to overcome the current CFE stalemate. This seminar drew representatives from more than 30 countries and organizations, including NATO and the OSCE, but a few key countries, most notably Turkey, were not present. The seminar speakers this time around were mostly academics and researchers, several of whom provocatively asserted that it had been a serious mistake to link resolution of "local conflicts" (i.e., Georgia and Moldova) to implementation of a "strategic agreement" like the Adapted CFE Treaty. While the German MFA certainly supports finding some way around the Istanbul commitments to get the Russians back on board with the CFE regime, Arms Control Commissioner Peter Gottwald generally hewed to the NATO line in his closing statement, underscoring that the Parallel Actions Package "as it was agreed by all NATO Member States and the Russian Federation" remains the best way to achieve a breakthrough. END SUMMARY.

GERMAN PROVOCATEURS

¶2. (C) Among the more provocative speakers was Wolfgang Richter of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), who in giving an historical analysis of the security situation in Europe from the creation the CSCE to the end of A/CFE negotiations in 1999, criticized the linkage inherent in the 1999 Istanbul commitments. He claimed that this linkage had allowed two "small regional conflicts" to dictate the fate of a much more important strategic agreement. He argued that arms control agreements should stand on their own and not be used a lever to achieve other political goals. No one would have ever suggested linking implementation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) to fulfillment of human rights obligations, but this was exactly the kind of linkage the Istanbul commitments had made. He was similarly critical of flank limits, claiming that the U.S. Congress had insisted on these, thereby reducing USG flexibility. Richter said while the CFE had been adapted several times during the 1990s, that process had regretfully stopped after 1999.

¶3. (C) Continuing in the same vein as Richter, Hans-Joachim Schmidt of the Frankfurt Peace Research Institute argued that going forward with ratification of the A/CFE would improve security and confidence in the South Caucasus and the Moldova by providing greater information and transparency on Russian forces. Even more explicitly than Richter, he called for

ending the linkage between Georgia/Moldova and CFE, arguing that it would end up "destroying" the arms control regime. In a later panel, Lithuanian MFA Policy Planning Director Robertas Rosinas countered the German line of argumentation on the overriding importance of CFE, noting that arms control should be a means to an end and not an end in and of itself. Without naming names, but clearly referring to Russia, he also said that arms control should also not be used "to acquire new or maintain old spheres of influence."

THE RUSSIAN LINE

14. (C) Giving a surprisingly balanced view, Andrej Zagorski of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations pointed out CFE is no longer serving the purpose it was created for -- namely, preventing a large-scale surprise attack -- since almost every CFE state, including Russia, is far below the ceilings for treaty-limited equipment (TLE). He acknowledged that the other important purpose of the treaty -- providing transparency through information exchange -- was being severely limited by the Russian suspension. He said he was "increasingly pessimistic" about saving CFE since none of the conceivable options seemed viable. He did not think provisional application of the CFE would pass muster with the U.S. Congress and even if it did, this would not fully satisfy the Russians, whose "wish list" goes beyond that (i.e., eliminating flank limits, etc.). Like other speakers, Zagorski suggested one potentially promising way forward would be to flesh out the commitment in the 1997 NATO Russia Founding Act not to deploy additional "substantial combat forces" and make it applicable to Russia as well.

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15. (C) During his main intervention at the end of the seminar, Anton Mazur, Head of the Russian MFA Conventional Arms Control Division and the highest ranking Russian government representative present, underscored a number of well-known Russian positions. Regarding flank limits, he argued that Russian objections were not just political, but practical -- they would keep Russia from deploying sufficient counterterrorism forces to the North Caucasus. On TLE, Mazur said Russia was not demanding strict parity with NATO, but complained that NATO countries all together were now entitled to 25,000 tanks, more than four times Russia's ceiling. He complained that Russia had tabled a proposal more than a year ago on negotiating a definition of "substantial combat forces," but that only one partner had responded. He also noted that the Russian aide-memoire circulated earlier this year had outlined in detail Moscow's views and ideas for moving ahead. "We are prepared for a detailed discussion on each of these issues," he said. "The problem is that our partners are not." He pushed for the Joint Consultative Group (JCG) in Vienna to discuss these issues, and not to be relegated to handling technical questions. He emphasized that "time was ticking" to save the treaty and that Russia was "getting used to" living without it.

GERMAN OFFICIALS HEW TO NATO POSITION

16. (C) In prepared remarks to conclude the seminar (full text emailed to EUR/RPM), Gottwald argued against seeing the CFE Treaty just from an historical perspective, noting that the CFE is "still very much needed today" because it "provides the only legally binding information, verification and limitation system we have in Europe." He also made a connection between conventional arms control and substrategic nuclear weapons, noting -- clearly with Russia in mind -- that "a perceived conventional inferiority may nourish claims to seek compensation with substrategic nuclear weapons." He generally hewed to the agreed NATO line on promoting the Parallel Actions Package, but also called for a "creative and flexible approach" in finding a way out of the CFE crisis.

COMMENT

17. (C) Germany appears to be ramping up for a major push on CFE early next year to take advantage of the good will and momentum expected from successful completion of START negotiations. The Germans sincerely believe that CFE is the cornerstone of European security and that its passing would be a major blow to arms control -- even though almost all the CFE signatory states are already far below their TLE ceilings. The Germans value CFE for its information-sharing and verification provisions, and also see it as critical for realizing their ambitions on nuclear arms control. They believe that once the CFE regime is back in place, it will create transparency and confidence, thereby decreasing Russian incentives to maintain its large stockpile of tactical nuclear weapons. That in turn, they believe, will make it much easier to get NATO concurrence on withdrawal of remaining NATO tactical nukes in Germany, a key goal of the new coalition government.

MURPHY